In the Claims

1. (currently amended) A method for evaluating an error-correcting code for a data block of a finite size, comprising:

defining an error-correcting code by a parity check matrix;

representing the parity check matrix as a bipartite graph; ~~and~~

iteratively renormalizing a single node in the bipartite graph until a predetermined threshold is reached; and

wherein the bipartite graph includes variable nodes representing variable bits of the data block, and check nodes representing parity bits of the data block, and the renormalizing further comprises:

selecting a particular variable node as a target node;

selecting a particular node to be renormalized;

measuring a distance between the target node and every other node in the bipartite graph;

if there is at least one leaf variable node, renormalizing a particular leaf variable node farthest from the target node, otherwise

if there is at least one leaf check node, renormalizing a particular leaf check node farthest from the target node, otherwise

renormalizing a non-leaf variable node farthest from the target node and having fewest directly connected check nodes.

2. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the predetermined threshold is a minimum number of remaining nodes.

3. (canceled)

4. (canceled)

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the bipartite graph is ~~loop-free~~ cycle-free.

6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the bipartite graph includes at least one ~~loop~~ cycle.

7. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 4~~ claim 1 wherein a transmission channel is a binary erasure channel, and further comprising:

decorating the bipartite graph with numbers p_{ia} representing probabilities of messages from variable nodes to check nodes and with numbers q_{ai} representing probabilities of messages from check nodes to variable nodes, and the renormalizing of the non-leaf variable node further comprises:

enumerating all check-nodes a which are connected to the non-leaf variable node;

enumerating all other variable nodes j attached to the check nodes a; and

transforming the numbers q_{aj}.

8. (original) The method of claim 7 wherein the transforming of the numbers q_{aj} further comprises:

enumerating all check nodes and variable nodes out to a predetermined distance from the target node;

constructing a logical argument to determine combinations of erasure causing a particular message from the check node a to the variable node j to be an erasure;

translating the logical argument into a transformation for the number q_{aj}.

9. (currently amended) The method of claim 8 further ~~comprising~~ comprising:

terminating the renormalizing upon reaching the predetermined threshold by an exact determination.

10. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein the remaining bipartite graph includes N nodes in the exact determination, and further comprising:

converting the decorated graph with numbers q_{ai} and p_{ia} into an erasure graph with an erasure probability x_i with each node i of the bipartite graph;

generating all 2^N possible messages; and

decoding each of the 2^N messages using a belief propagation decoder, where each message has a probability $p = \prod x_i \prod (1 - x_j)$.

11. (currently amended) ~~The method of claim 7 wherein all the numbers q_{ai} are initialized to zero, and~~

~~all the numbers p_{ia} are initialized to an erasure rate of the transmission channel.~~

The method of claim 7 wherein all the numbers q_{ai} are initialized to zero, and

all the numbers p_{ia} are initialized to an erasure rate of the transmission channel.

12. (original) The method of claim 7 further comprising:

defining the error-correcting code by a generalized parity check matrix wherein columns represent variable bits and rows define parity bits, and wherein an overbar is placed above columns representing hidden variable bits which are not transmitted; and

representing the hidden variable bits by hidden nodes in the bipartite graph.

13. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the transmission channel is a binary erasure channel and wherein the error-correcting code is defined by a generalized parity check matrix, and further comprising:

initializing the numbers p_{ia} for hidden nodes i to one.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 7 wherein the transmission channel is an additive white Gaussian noise channel, and further comprising:

representing messages between nodes in the bipartite graph by Gaussian distributions.

15. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, and further comprising:

selecting a set of criterion by which to evaluate error-correcting codes;

generating a plurality of error-correcting codes; and

searching the plurality of error-correcting codes for an optimal error-correcting code according to the set of criterion.

16. (currently amended) The method of claim 15, and further comprising:

evaluating an error rate for each error-correcting code at a plurality of nodes; and

generating the optimal error-correcting code according to the evaluated error-rate.

17. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

evaluating an error rate for the renormalized bipartite graph.

18. (currently amended) A method for evaluating an error-correcting code for a data block of a finite size, comprising:

defining an error-correcting code by a parity check matrix;

representing the parity check matrix as a bipartite graph, wherein the bipartite graph includes variable nodes representing variable bits of the data block, and check nodes representing parity bits of the data block;

iteratively renormalizing a single node in the bipartite graph until a predetermined threshold is reached, wherein the renormalizing further ~~comprises;~~ comprises:

selecting a particular variable node as a target node; and

selecting a particular node to be renormalized;

measuring a distance between the target node and every other node in the bipartite graph;

if there is at least one leaf variable node, renormalizing a particular leaf variable node farthest from the target node, otherwise

if there is at least one leaf check node, renormalizing a particular leaf check node farthest from the target node, otherwise

renormalizing a non-leaf variable node farthest from the target node and having fewest directly connected check nodes;

wherein a transmission channel is a binary erasure channel, and further ~~comprising;~~ comprising:

decorating the bipartite graph with numbers p_{ia} representing probabilities of messages from variable nodes to check nodes and with numbers q_{ai} representing probabilities of messages from check nodes to variable nodes, and the renormalizing of the non-leaf variable node further comprises:

enumerating all check-nodes a which are connected to the non-leaf variable node;

enumerating all other variable nodes j attached to the check nodes a;

wherein the enumerating further ~~comprises;~~ comprises:

enumerating all check nodes and variable nodes out to a predetermined distance from the target node;

constructing a logical argument to determine combinations of ~~erasure~~ erasures causing a particular message from the check node a to the variable node j to be an erasure;

translating the logical argument into a transformation for the number q_{aj}; and

transforming the ~~numbers q_{aj}~~ numbers q_{aj}.